

2 ALTERNATIVES

This section describes in detail the no-action alternative and the proposed action. Then based on the information and analysis presented in the sections on the Affected Environment and the Probable Impacts, this section presents the beneficial and adverse environmental effects in comparative form, providing a clear basis for choice among the options for the decision maker and the public.

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES.

2.1.1 NO ACTION (STATUS QUO)

The no action alternative is the existing Water Supply and Environment (WSE) regulation schedule that would continue to be used should no action be taken. It is sometimes referenced in this document as the “base” or “baseline”.

2.1.2 CLASS LIMIT ADJUSTMENT

The Class Limit Adjustment (CLA) lowers the classification limits of the tributary hydrologic conditions and the seasonal and multi-seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook (LONINO). Thus, the decision trees (*Figures 2 & 3*) will lead to more frequent releases. The decision trees, which utilizes three operational elements to evaluate the conditions in the lake and the regional system, would continue to be used for Lake Okeechobee operational decisions. The class limit adjustment would modify the thresholds to the lower classification limits called for by the decision trees for releases to the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) and to the estuaries. More detailed information and the simulated performance of the CLA is presented in *Appendix B*.

2.2 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred alternative is 2.1.2, Class Limit Adjustment (CLA).

2.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Table 1 lists alternatives considered and summarizes the major features and consequences of the proposed action and alternatives. See section 4.0 Environmental Effects for a more detailed discussion of impacts of alternatives.

Table 1: Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts

ALTERNATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR	Class Limit Adjustment	No Action Status Quo
PROTECTED SPECIES	No impact	No Impact
FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES	Benefits anticipated in the lake due to improved habitat quality, especially for sport fisheries. Reduces the occurrences of high damaging estuary flows, which reduces the potential for adverse impact to estuarine flora and fauna.	High lake levels could impact the lake's littoral zone vegetation resulting in adverse impacts to fish and wildlife habitat. The potential for higher lake stages could result in WSE prompting higher estuary flows. High flows could adversely impact estuarine biota.
VEGETATION	Lower lake stage would benefit the lake's littoral zone vegetation. Reduces the occurrences of high damaging estuary flows, which reduces the potential for adverse impact to estuarine flora.	High lake levels could impact the lake's littoral zone vegetation. The potential for higher lake stages could result in WSE prompting higher estuary flows. High flows could adversely impact estuarine biota.
WATER QUALITY	Benefits anticipated in shoreline areas of the lake where submerged plants occur.	Greater potential for high damaging estuary flows resulting in more turbid conditions in the estuaries.
RECREATION	No impact	No impact
AESTHETICS	Benefits anticipated due to reduced algal blooms in shoreline plant-dominated areas of the lake if decreased water depths result in increased plant growth.	No impact

ALTERNATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR	Class Limit Adjustment	No Action Status Quo
NAVIGATION	No impact	No impact
ECONOMICS	No impact	No impact
ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT	May reduce adverse impact to estuarine flora and fauna due to reduction in high damaging estuary flows.	Potential for higher lake stages, which could result in WSE prompting higher estuary flows. High volume flows could adversely impact estuarine biota.
WATER SUPPLY	No measurable impact	No impact
FLOOD PROTECTION	No measurable impact.	No impact